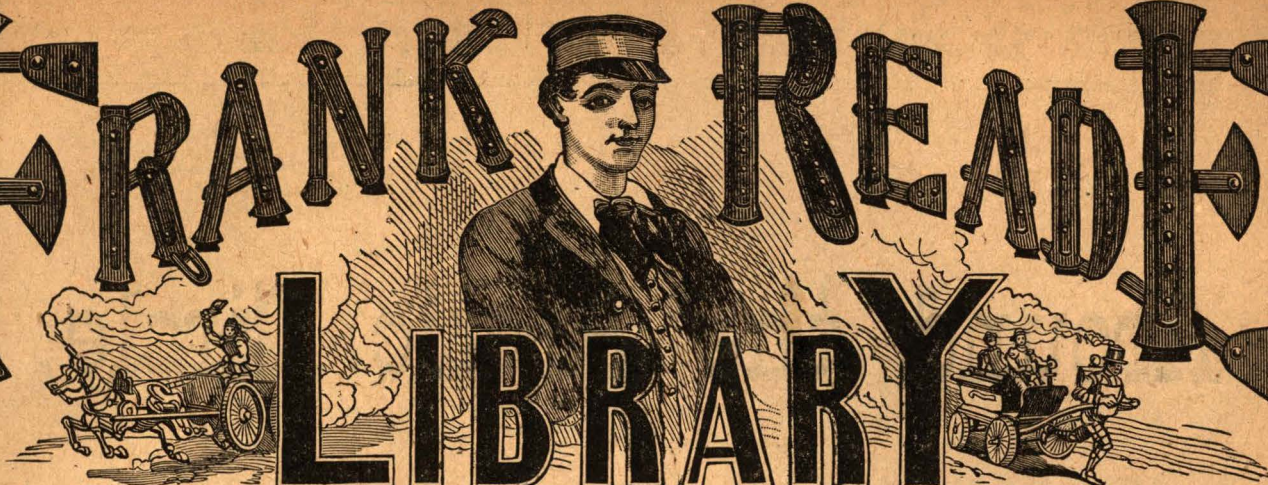


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## Around the Arctic Circle; or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Most Famous Trip With His Air-Ship, the "Orbit."

By "NONAME."



They advanced again to the attack. Nearer they drew to the startling surprise which was in store for them. The next moment they were upon it. The air was full of tumbling Esquimaux. Dogs and men alike received the terrific shock of the dynamos.



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# Around the Arctic Circle;

OR,

## Frank Reade, Jr.'s Most Famous Trip With His Air-Ship, the "Orbit."

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Abandoned in Alaska," "100 Miles Below the Surface of the Sea," "Under the Equator From Ecuador to Borneo," "Frank Reade, Jr.'s 'Sky Scraper,'" "Under the Yellow Sea," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### BEGINNING OF THE TRIP.

FRANK READE, JR., after months of patient work, had at last finished his new air-ship.

The "Orbit" it was called, and it was a marvel of a certainty, and such as no other brain but the gifted young inventor's could possibly have devised.

The report went forth over the country with thrilling force that the famous young inventor was about to take a most wonderful trip with his new air-ship. When it became known what this was he was inundated with applications from scientific men all over the country to be permitted to accompany him.

From earliest times all attempts to explore the Polar regions have been known as flat failures. Thousands of lives and many good ships have been sacrificed in the daring efforts to reach the North Pole.

It was not Frank's particular purpose to reach the North Pole.

He took a chart and placed his finger upon a point in North America, and said to his friend, the distinguished sportsman and traveler, Dick Huntley:

"Have you ever followed the course of the Arctic Circle around the globe? Well, I can assure you that most ideas of its course are erroneous."

"Ah, how so?" asked Huntley.

"The general opinion is that it passes through the Arctic Ocean and in no spot is free from the perpetual snow and ice of the frozen North."

"I'll own up to that idea myself," declared Dick. "I must admit that I never traced the course of the Arctic Circle."

"Well, the theory is all wrong," declared Frank, impressively.

"As yet, of course, civilization has not gained a very strong hold upon the Circle."

"But nevertheless it continues around the globe almost entirely on land. It crosses the North Atlantic for a few hundred miles, and also the Behring Straits. It also skips over a number of fiords and small arms of the sea in Norway and Russia, but nine-tenths of its course is on land."

"Indeed!"

"It also crosses four continents; North America, Greenland, Europe and Asia. In Asia there are many fertile valleys formed right on the Arctic Circle. Some of the fiercest tribes of Northern Asia are found above the Circle. There are many unexplored parts of the world there. To be sure there are seas which are frozen over at certain times of the year. But there are valleys where at the proper season of the year the temperature is as mild as a couple of thousand miles further south."

Huntley bit the end off his cigar and was thoughtful a moment.

"If that is so," he said, intercepting Frank's purpose, "why not take a trip around the Circle with the new air-ship?"

"That is what I intend to do," replied Frank.

"The deuce you do!"

"I mean it!"

Dick arose and paced the floor for several moments. Then in a much excited manner he said:

"Will you stand by your agreement, Frank?"

"I will if I made one. What is it?"

"To allow me to accompany you on your next wonderful trip."

Frank smiled.

"I will on one condition," he said.

"And that——"

"That you will stick it out, and not cry baby or wish to go home."

Dick looked at Frank and saw at once that he was joking, so refrained from getting angry.

"Oh, perhaps I may not be the first one to cry baby!" he declared.

"Well," said Frank, finally, "you shall go if you wish. You must be ready at an early day and——"

The door of the draughting room where they were suddenly burst open and a dark, short and stout, with dancing eyes and a comical grin, came tumbling into the room.

He turned a comical handspring and landed right in front of Frank.

"Yere yo' am, Marse Frank," he cried; "it am a tellumgram from New York I done fink."

"A telegram," said Frank. "Oh, very likely some crank who wants me to take him in to see the air-ship. However, let's read it."

He broke the seal and gave a start.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed.

He read the message and then handed it to Dick, who also read it. Thus it was worded:

"FRANK READE, JR., Readestown.

"DEAR SIR:

"We hear that you think of taking a trip to the northern regions. Now, there is not extant any report of the nature of the country or the people along the course of the Arctic Circle. If we could only find out about this we would consider it a great benefit to science and geography.

"At a special meeting last night the society voted to pay a reward of five thousand dollars to the man who would trace the Arctic Circle around the globe, make notes and observations, and turn the same over to us. We hope you will be inclined to favorably consider this proposition and communicate with us at an early day.

"Very sincerely,

"PROFESSOR BUXTON BROWN,

"Of the New York Scientific Institute."

"Whew!" exclaimed Dick, "that's not a bad offer. But five thousand dollars will hardly remunerate one for such a trip."

"Of course not," said Frank.

"Will you answer this?"

"Oh, yes."

Frank wrote on the back of the message as follows:

"PROF. BUXTON BROWN—It has for some time been my purpose to carry out the idea you speak of. I do not want the five thousand dollars—donate it to some charity—but I will be glad to serve you in any way I can.

FRANK READE, JR."

"Here, Pomp," said the young inventor, "send this reply at once."

"A'right, sah," replied the darky, as he bounced out of the room.

Dick Huntley was much excited.

Indeed it was quite a serious reflection that he was about to start on such a wonderful trip.



It was not to be free from great perils as he knew. Indeed it was possible that he might never return, but this did not worry him. He was a youth of sand and resolution. A little while later he left the Reade Machine Shops and started for the depot to take the first train.

For Dick was not a native of Readestown but of New York city.

Preparations went quickly ahead for the famous Arctic aerial voyage. Throughout the country everybody was intensely interested. A week passed quickly by.

We will not dwell upon the details of the start from Readestown which was witnessed by a large crowd.

Neither will we follow the course of the Orbit as she sails northward over British America for the Arctic Circle as no notable incident occurred during the journey.

But we will take the reader direct to the arctic regions where one day the air-ship hung directly over the line of the Arctic Circle in a storm driven sky.

The passengers aboard the air-ship were four in number, and consisted of Frank Reade, Jr., Dick Huntley, Pomp, the negro, and Barney O'Shea, one of the quickest witted Irishmen you ever saw.

These two faithful employees of Frank Reade, Jr., had been in his employ for years, and also had been in the service of his father before him.

They were faithful and always on hand. The best of friends, each was, however, fond of playing practical jokes on the other as we shall see in the course of our story.

The air-ship made a beautiful picture as she hung there in mid-air with great banks of clouds sweeping at times across her deck.

The Orbit was in shape long and somewhat of the proportions of a cigar. The hull was of thinly rolled but bullet-proof aluminum.

The sustaining power of the Orbit was furnished by three powerful rotascopes driven at terrific speed by powerful electric engines.

She had a long deck guarded with brass rails, and a cabin with windows of plate glass was amidships. The pilot-house forward contained the electric key board which regulated the machinery, the rotascopes and the propeller.

A powerful search-light enabled the ship to travel on the darkest night with safety.

This is a faint idea of the external appearance of the air-ship.

Passing into the cabin one found it small but richly furnished, and containing all the necessary comforts for an extended trip.

Beyond this was a small dining-saloon. Then came state-rooms and a magazine where were kept stands of small arms and any quantity of ammunition.

There were provisions aboard for a long cruise, though it was intended to do some hunting.

All of the voyagers were on deck and studying the angry looking sky.

"Begorra, Misther Frank," cried Barney, "there's the looks av a storm out yender. Thim cloud's looks loike it."

"I hardly think we will get it," said Frank. "Arctic skies are by no means sunny, you know!"

"Ugh! I should say not!" exclaimed Dick, with a shiver, "this is worse than an east wind from Boston harbor!"

"Dere am plenty ob ice an' snow yer fo' anybody," averred Pomp. "I done flink it wud be a poor place fer de ice business!"

Everybody laughed at this. Then Frank stepped into the pilot-house. He had his bearings, and set the course of the air-ship due west along the Arctic Circle.

Below all was a region of ice and snow. The voyagers wore suits of fur, and were none too warm at that.

"Are we off, Frank?" shouted Dick.

The young professor pressed the propeller key. The air-ship shot forward.

"We are off!" he cried.

The trip around the Arctic Circle was begun.

## CHAPTER II.

### AT CAMP MCTAVISH.

DUE west the air-ship held her way. There was a stiff breeze at her back to assist her.

All the seas below were frozen over. Snow lay in great masses. It was no part of the Arctic ocean they were over, but certain bays and straits which lay between various islands.

They were upon a longitudinal line with Chicago, and consequently not far to the westward of the Melville Peninsular.

Frank expected to reach Bathurst Inlet in one day.

Beyond that the Arctic Circle passes through the middle of the Great Bear Lake, and plunges into the richest fur country on the face of the globe.

The voyagers, in spite of the bitter cold, which was about thirty degrees below zero, clung to the deck and watched the wonderful scenery below.

It was a remarkable panorama which swept continually before their vision as the air-ship sailed on.

At times the low-lying clouds engulfed them, and the earth became lost to view.

They were a little over a mile in mid-air. Objects below looked pretty small.

Nevertheless hundreds of wild animals of various species were seen. Of these wolves and bears prevailed in the greatest number.

The tip of Bathurst Inlet rears exactly upon the Arctic Circle. The Arctic day was just closing when the broken ice fields hove into view.

Here, it was the belief, there existed a fur station. This Frank wished to find.

So careful watch was kept as they sailed slowly on.

But no sign of human life was seen so far below until just as the darkness began to intensify. Dick gave a sharp cry.

"I think I see it!" he cried.

"Where?" exclaimed Frank, springing to his side.

Dick pointed to a black speck distant some miles upon the ice pack. Frank took his most powerful glass and began to study it. It did not require many moments for him to become satisfied that it was indeed a camp.

"Hold the air ship down, Barney," he commanded; "we'll take a look at that place."

The Orbit's course was accordingly changed for the distant camp.

In a few moments the outlines of the big camp could be seen.

It was a long, low-roofed structure, with an angle to protect its yard from the north. It was built of logs several feet in thickness.

In these fur camps the hunters were often exiled all winter.

When they came out in the spring it was always with a great stock of rich furs which they took south to Fort Enterprise or some other station of the Hudson Bay Company.

The life of the fur hunters might be deemed most lonely and desolate by some.

To be sure the comforts of civilization were missing.

But there were the traps and the chase to afford no end of excitement. Always some new adventure was on the tapis, so that altogether the life of the fur hunter is not so bad after all.

Buried in the northern wilds they make little visible stir in the world. But they are hardy, brave men, and the product of their skill and adventure furnishes the rich lady of civilization with those coveted winter garments which are at once a thing of beauty and protection.

This camp at Bathurst Inlet was known as Camp McTavish.

The leader of the band of twenty or more fur hunters was a canny Scotchman by name—Alexander McRae.

McRae was probably more widely known in the northwest than any other man.

He had penetrated, it was said, almost to the North Pole itself, had trapped and shot animals in every part of the great fur regions.

The great camp or long house occupied by the fur hunters was divided into various rooms.

These were occupied by the fur hunter and his family, for many of them were married.

It might be thought a strange and inhospitable region for a woman. But the bracing climate and hygiene rendered the children of the fur hunters strong and healthy.

The Orbit was seen by those in the fur camp long before it reached a spot above it.

Of course the most intense of excitement was created.

None of them had ever seen an air-ship before, and it was truly a novel sight.

Men, women and children thronged the yard in the light of the declining day. To reassure them Frank stepped to the rail with the American flag.

It was answered with a cheer, and then up to the flagstaff of the camp ran the British flag and the burgee of the Hudson Bay Company.

A number of the fur hunters fired a salute with their rifles.

It was evident that the visitors were very welcome. The air ship began to descend.

"Are we really going to stop here?" asked Dick.

"Just for a briel while," said Frank.

The air-ship settled down rapidly and rested upon the snow in the stockade inclosed yard. In an instant the occupants of the place crowded about.

"Hello, strangers!" cried a tall, powerfully built man with great red whiskers; "glad to see ye. Ye're welcome to Camp McTavish, and I'm McTavish himself. So they've got to flying in the air, eh? That beats the railroads. Well, there is no telling what will come next."

Frank shook hands with McTavish, and all were soon upon extremely sociable terms.

The fur hunters could not recover from their wonder and interest in the air-ship.

It seemed a marvelous thing to them that it could actually travel in the air and carry so large a freight.

Frank allowed them singly to come aboard and inspect the air-ship.

Then they showed their native hospitality by inviting the travelers into the big living room of the camp and giving entertainment.

A repast was served of juicy meats, and the products of the frozen North. It was a unique experience for the aerial travelers.

Seated before the mighty fire-place of Camp McTavish, where the wood fire blazed merrily, the travelers enjoyed themselves.

Frank conversed with McTavish.

"What are ye doin' with your air-ship in this part of the world?" asked the big fur hunter.

"We are going to travel around the earth on the Arctic Circle," replied Frank.

McTavish looked astonished.

"Ye don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Hang me, but that's a big ways!"



"Yes, if one was compelled to walk. But with the air-ship it is not an impossible feat."

"In course not!" agreed the big hunter. "I wish I was in yer shoes. Then ye intend to go back home?"

"Yes!"

"What do ye think of the fur country, anyway?" he asked abruptly.

"I think it is a great country!" replied Frank.

"It's great enough," rejoined McTavish, "an' sometimes it gets monotonous. But I don't believe any of us would feel contented in civilization."

"Well, you are free from any fear of enemies here!"

"Sho! don't ye believe it!"

"What?"

"We're in mortal danger all the while. Why, thar's the nastiest gang of Injins come up here in their summer you ever saw. They're always kickin' up a muss with us."

"Then in the winter ther confounded Esquimaux cum over an' try to annihilate us. We're fighting fer our lives nine-tenths of the time."

Frank was astonished.

"Is that true?" he exclaimed.

"You kin bet it is!"

"Have you had trouble with them lately?"

"Within a month. We hev allus stood 'em off though, but fer all that they're apt to cum down on us at any time. Yesterday one of our scouts cum in an' reported a gang of the Esquimaux as bearin' down this way!"

The words had barely left the lips of McTavish when a distant yell caused him to leap to his feet.

At the same moment the door burst open and in from the blackness of the night, burst a man who was more dead than alive.

His fur suit was rent and torn. Blood flowed from many wounds and he was pale and gasping.

"McDermot!" cried McTavish, as he sprung to his feet. "What has happened ye, boy? What's up?"

"The devils chased me across the pack!" replied the wounded fur hunter, "but they didn't catch me! They are coming to attack us, a thousand strong!"

"The Esquimaux?"

"Yes."

Instantly all was excitement. Men rushed to arms.

Women and children huddled in the main room of the camp. The face of McTavish was white and stern.

"Ye see, friend," he said to Frank, "it's no easy matter to hold yer own in such an accursed country as this."

"Fear not," said Frank, very calmly. "I'll help you out, my friend."

"You!" exclaimed McTavish.

"Yes."

The Scotchman was puzzled.

"I don't know as I understand ye," he said.

"Well, I'll show you," replied the young inventor. "Come on, boys!"

Barney and Pomp and Dick who were near by sprung up with this. Frank led the way quickly to the air-ship.

Springing aboard, he went into the pilot house where the others joined him.

In another moment the air-ship was several hundred feet in the air and hovering over the camp.

It was a thrilling scene spread below. Fires were lit in all corners of the big yard. In the light of these the fur hunters prepared their defense.

But Frank stepped to the search-light and turned on its rays. The light of the fires was hardly in comparison.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ACROSS BEHRING STRAITS.

The light of the camp-fires was pale, indeed, in the electric glare. The fur-hunters were astounded.

But Frank quickly sent the search-light's rays sweeping out over the distant ice-pack.

An immense throng of men, dogs and sledges were seen coming full speed toward the camp.

They were the savage Esquimaux, and they were bent upon murder and violence.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Dick Huntley. "There is an army of them, Frank!"

"That is about right," agreed the young inventor. "But I guess we can care for them."

"They are enough in number to overrun the camp."

"Yes."

Frank allowed the air-ship to drift out over the ice pack a ways. Then he trailed some wires down upon the ice directly in the path of the approaching crew.

These wires were all connected with the dynamos and heavily charged. To come in contact with one meant a terrific shock.

The Esquimaux paused at sight of the great light in the air above them.

They were no doubt puzzled, but only for a time were they disconcerted. Then they advanced again to the attack.

Nearer they drew to the startling surprise which was in store for them. The next moment they were upon it.

The air was full of tumbling Esquimaux. Dogs and men alike received the terrific shock of the dynamos.

They were literally piled in insensible heaps. Frank caused the air ship to move forward so that the wires would pass on to the others.

But as the wires struck the astounded Esquimaux, they emitted flashes of light.

This warned the rear line of the foe, and they incontinently fled.

The rout was an utter and most effectual one.

The Esquimaux did not recover and were soon scattered over the plain.

The battle was ended.

Camp McTavish was saved from what might have been a fatal attack. The air-ship returned to the camp yard.

To say that McTavish and his people were delighted and gratified would be a mild statement.

They fairly embraced Frank when he once more stood among them. They were most effusive in their expressions of pleasure!

The rest of the night was without incident. When day came again the air-ship took leave of McTavish.

From Bathurst Inlet to the Great Bear Lake there is a wild stretch of frigid country.

The air-ship crossed this, however, as far as the banks of the Copper Mine River before another day.

Here a brief stop was made to look down upon the swollen current of this wonderful stream which flows north into Caronation Gulf.

"It is said that all this region is very rich in minerals," declared Frank; "there is no doubt plenty of gold in placers hereabouts."

"It will stay here I reckon," declared Dick. "I'm afraid it will be a good while before anybody will be able to mine it."

"That is true!" agreed Frank. "Yet the world is progressing. I expect to see the day when we may travel to Europe by rail."

"To Europe by rail?" exclaimed Dick, incredulously.

"Certainly!"

"What! bridge the Atlantic?"

"By no means. Simply bridge Behrings Straits. In no place is the depth too great or the distance either for that matter. I tell you we shall have railroad and telegraphic connections with Russia yet."

"I hope I may live to see it."

"I hope we all may, and what is more, I believe that we will."

The next morning the air-ship left the Copper Mine River country behind, and then passing the ruins of old Fort Confidence they came in sight of the mighty inland sea known as the Great Bear Lake.

It was a mighty body of water, and presented a magnificent spectacle. It was not entirely frozen over.

Across Great Bear Lake the air-ship drifted. Beyond was a tract of timberland leading a course for many miles, even to the banks of the mighty Mackenzie River.

This river, which has its source in the Great Slave Lake, is only exceeded in size by the Yukon.

These two are the principal Arctic rivers.

In their currents swarm millions of salmon only waiting for the inroad of civilization to lend themselves as a fresh industry when the famous Columbia river shall become exhausted.

Also, in the sands of these rivers gold exists in great quantities.

It only awaits the solution of the problem how to mine it, which will be settled at no very distant day. Then the inhabitants of the world will turn to the mighty Northwest for its greatest resources.

"Oh, if this region only had a temperate climate what a wonderful place it would be!" cried Dick.

"And even that may come to pass," said Frank seriously.

Dick was astounded.

"What! You don't mean that?"

"Yes, I do."

"But—how, I'd like to ask? How will it ever be within the power of man to change the climate of any part of the world?"

"That branch of science is governed by a power which is yet in its infancy," said Frank; "that power is electricity."

"Electricity?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Dick, incredulously, "I will admit that electricity has done much, but that it will ever be able to change the laws of Nature—well, I cannot credit it."

"It is not at all improbable," contended Frank. "It has been clearly demonstrated that rain can be made to fall in arid sections by means of explosions in the upper air. This must mean a precipitation by means of electric accumulation. If this is possible it will yet be demonstrated as clearly possible by the concentration of electric heat waves and other adjuncts to actually change the temperature of any part of the globe. A change of temperature necessarily means a change of climate."

"By Jove! that is an able argument," declared Dick. "Do you intend to include such an invention in your wonderful list Frank?"

"I have nothing to say on the subject at present," declared Frank.

"We will leave that to the future. Electrical research is the study of the future, though."

"I believe you."

And here the subject dropped.

Still the air-ship kept on its westward course.

The Arctic Circle was followed as exactly as possible, as Frank intended it should all the way around the earth.

The country between the Mackenzie and the Yukon was now crossed.



One day the water of the latter river, which is at this point almost a lake in width, burst into view.

The greatest game country of all was now spread before the voyagers.

Moose and deer abounded in the glens and mountain wilds. At times bands of Indian hunters were seen in the chase.

But Frank had no intention of spending any time in Alaska, for he had once before explored this region.

He was anxious to reach Asia, so pushed ahead with all speed.

The Yukon was left to the south and the next waters to come into view were those of the Kotzebue Sound, which is north of Cape Prince of Wales.

At last the Behring Straits were reached. Beyond these it was believed lay the land of wonders which the party were so anxious to explore.

The northern wilds of Siberia must afford much of interest. So the aerial voyagers were all expectant.

The distance across the Straits to the East Cape was not great. The air-ship had soon covered it.

Behring Straits were left behind and now a mighty mountainous land lay before them.

It was the land of the Tartar and the Russian exile. Across Asia in this latitude the Arctic Circle is dotted with wretched villages and small cities.

These are mostly the colonies of the exiles sent thither from Russia. For several days the air-ship traveled westward from Behring Straits, however, without encountering any sign of human life.

The region was strangely wild and desolate. But on the fourth day a narrow valley was seen carpeted with grass and in which were a number of rude dwellings.

As the air-ship hovered over this the voyagers pressed to the rail eagerly with glasses to take a look at the strange people.

And they looked strange indeed.

As near as could be seen from that height they were a cross between the Mongolian and the Russian race.

In explanation of this, Frank said:

"There are many Mongolians in these far northern regions. They are a penetrating race and come here from China. The Russian exiles must, in course of time, assimilate with them."

"They are a wretched-looking crew," declared Dick. "I never saw anything to beat them. None of the lowest peasants of Europe can compare with them."

"That is very true!" agreed Frank, "this part of the earth, the latitude south of here as far as the Yellow Sea, is under a terrible ban of ignorance and religious prejudice. It will, I fear, be many years before they will arouse from such a terrible spell."

"Indeed, I believe you!" agreed Dick.

Then he cried:

"But look! What are they doing?"

It could be seen that the inhabitants of the curious little town had all rushed to the center of the village, and were madly waving banners and signaling the air-ship.

Dick was astonished.

"What can they mean?" he cried, "their actions are very curious!"

"So it seems!" agreed Frank.

"Can it be that they want to make friends with us?"

"It looks like it!"

"Jove! I'd like to go down and have a talk with the poor devils. What do you say, Frank?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### IN THE SIBERIAN TOWN.

THE young inventor by way of reply turned and called to Barney who was in the pilot-house.

"Lower the air-ship, Barney," he said. "Go down within speaking distance!"

"All right, sor!"

The air-ship settled down rapidly. When but a couple of hundred feet above the earth it remained stationary.

Then Frank leaned over and shouted to the excited villagers:

"Aho down there!"

An unintelligible reply came back.

"What did he say?" asked Dick.

"I don't know!" replied Frank. "I cannot understand their tongue."

"Try it again!"

Frank did so.

But it was quite impossible to make the Siberians understand. Then the young inventor hit upon an idea.

He was a good linguist.

He could speak French, German and Italian quite fluently. One after another of these languages he tried.

And finally hit the mark.

Whatever should bring a German to that part of the world it was not easy to say. But when Frank called:

"Sprechen sie Deutsche?" the answer came back in guttural tones.

We will anglicize the conversation.

"Who are you?" asked Frank, "and why are you so far away from the Rhine?"

"I am Carl Hansbad," was the reply. "I am seeking my fortune in this part of the world."

Frank saw that the tan of the Asiatic sun and the motley attire of

the Tartar had not altogether hidden the Teutonic identity of Carl Hansbad.

The young inventor conversed with him at some length and learned some important points.

Carl assured him that the villagers were simple and friendly people, and insisted that the aerial voyagers should spend a while in the place.

"You will find them very warm hearted and hospitable," he said. "I promise you good treatment."

Frank turned to Dick.

"What do you say?" he exclaimed. "Shall we stop?"

"I am very willing," declared young Huntley. "I think it would be very interesting to study their manners and customs."

"Then stop it is!" declared Frank. "Let her go down, Barney."

The Celt obeyed.

The air ship settled down upon a level plot of ground and the natives crowded about her in sheer wonderment.

It was not difficult for them to understand her wonderful powers, but the reason therefore was not so obvious.

Frank received a few representatives introduced by Hansbad aboard the air ship.

He showed them over her and explained the element of electricity as well as he could.

But it was yet a mystery most inexplicable to the untutored Tartars, who were much mystified.

However, the reception given their distinguished visitors was a most warm one; the hospitality of this benighted people was of the truest sort.

Preparations were instantly made for their elaborate entertainment.

The Khan, as leader of the community, a fierce mustached but affable old chap, gave forth innumerable orders.

These were explained to the voyagers by Carl Hansbad.

"They have declared a fete," he said. "You are to be the honored guests."

"Good!" cried Dick, joyfully. "This is a splendid chance for us to study the customs of these curious people."

It looked as if the voyagers were bound to enjoy their stay in the Tartar village.

The Khan had given out orders for a celebration on a magnificent scale.

The plain about was paraded by gaily dressed people. All sorts of bright tents were erected, flags were spread to the breeze, and a race-course was laid out.

For the Tartars are renowned the world over as horsemen.

While their horses are small and clumsy, yet they are capable of running long distance races without tiring.

Barney and Pomp were in high glee.

They were quickly on pleasant terms with many of the natives, though unable to speak their language.

This, however, did not altogether handicap them, for they resorted to sign talk.

The Tartars brought gifts of choice furs, northern fruits and other things to the aerial voyagers.

They also brought a peculiar sort of drink, not unlike absinthe, and which was intoxicating. Barney and Pomp came dangerously near forgetting themselves after drinking a little of this.

Very soon arrangements were all completed for the fete.

Great tables were spread beneath vari-colored pavilions, and upon them were placed the choicest of viands cooked a la Tartar.

A gilded chair was placed upon a dais alongside the air-ship, and here the Khan sat with all his retinue about him.

A Tartar band played weird music upon curious instruments, and then the sports began.

It might be said that the gathering was motley in dress, but it was lively in character and brilliant in achievement.

First came the athletic sports.

Two sturdy Tartars leaped into a ring and engaged in a lively fray.

They were masters of the art, and it was most interesting to watch them.

For a time they struggled, then one vanquished the other, and the bout was at an end.

Next followed a broadsword contest, and then came juggling after the Mongolian fashion and athletic tumbling.

Seated on the air-ship's deck, the voyagers enjoyed the affair immensely.

"This is an honor which we ought to appreciate well," declared Dick. "I enjoy it."

"Right!" agreed Frank. "Hello! what is coming now?"

Into the ring was led a high prancing horse. Soon others appeared.

Each boasted only a surcingle around its body. There was no suggestion of a saddle.

Then there appeared a number of small Tartar youths, stripped to the waist, and carrying whips, not unlike a several lashed knout, such as is used in Russia.

They vaulted upon the backs of the little steeds. There was much preliminary busting into position, then with the crack of a carbine the race was on.

Away went the little Kirghiz ponies in a cloud.

For a time they were bunched closely.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick, excitedly. "I'll bet on that fellow with the red turban, who rides the little black!"



"Golly, jes' look at dem gallop!" cried Pomp. "Meks me fink ob de days when I was a pickanniny an' rode in New Orleans."

"Bejabers, it's loike the races in ould Tipperary!" cried Barney.

"An embryo Sheephead Bay or Monmouth," rejoined Dick. "My money on the black!"

"And the black wins!" cried Frank. "I congratulate you, Dick!"

"I knew it!" cried Huntley, wildly. "I feel like hugging that boy!" The race had put everybody in a good humor. More followed and were enjoyable.

Then there came a lull. Carl Hansbad came aboard the air ship and addressed Frank.

"The people would like to see your air ship in some evolutions," he said, "if it would please you."

"Certainly," replied Frank readily. "I am very glad to contribute to the fund."

The anchors were taken in and Frank invited the Khan and a number of his friends to take a little aerial trip.

They responded with alacrity.

A few moments later the air ship was speeding toward the zenith.

Up it went with thrilling velocity.

The earth was left so far below that it looked like a mere speck.

Then clouds intervened and it disappeared entirely.

At this the Tartars became victims of awful terror.

They clung to the rail and pleaded wildly to be taken back. Indeed, they might have thrown themselves overboard had not the voyagers interfered.

Frank yielding to their fears allowed the air-ship to descend.

As the earth came in sight again the Tartars recovered somewhat from their fears.

Down sank the air-ship until within a thousand feet of the earth. The Tartars were now quite recovered from their terror.

Carl interpreted their remarks to the effect that they were not yet sufficiently purged of their earthly sins to sail into Paradise in their fleshly raiment.

This was certainly a very reasonable explanation of their terror, though the Americans laughed heartily over it.

Frank made numerous maneuvers in the air with the air-ship, and finally descended once more to the village green.

The Khan and his colleagues were exuberant over their trip now that the danger was all over. They were much envied by the others.

Frank now proceeded to show the Tartars many wonderful electric tricks. He brought out a long wire connected with the dynamos, and sufficiently charged to shock without injuring.

The wire was laid upon the ground, and Carl, in the native language, directed a number of the Tartars to pick it up with both hands.

They did so, the circuit was made, and fully a score of the astonished victims were dancing about wildly, and trying to free themselves from the wire.

But this they were quite unable to do.

It held them with the clutch of a giant.

In vain they tried to free themselves. It was a comical sight, and even the other Tartars laughed at it.

But all were unable to understand the mysterious unseen power which held them so firmly. This was the mystery.

Frank released them after a few moments of electrical bondage, and they were glad of their freedom.

## CHAPTER V.

### LAND OF THE EXILES.

THE Tartars had now acquired more than an ordinary amount of respect for the wonderful inventor of the ship which could fly in the air.

He was to them a visitor from a land of wonders far beyond the limited horizon of their world. They imagined all sorts of vague things of that wonderful world.

Carl Hansbad explained to them as well as he could, but this did not exactly clear the mystery.

That day and night the aerial travelers spent in the little Asiatic village.

The next morning early Frank took leave of Yokaunsk, which was the name of the village.

The Khan was reluctant to say farewell, as were his people. Carl Hansbad beseeched Frank to take him along as a member of the air-ship's crew.

But the young inventor was compelled to refuse this application. So the German yet continued to seek his fortune among the Tartars.

Westward still the air-ship sailed on.

Towns and villages were now quite plentiful along the Arctic Circle. Some of these were quite thrifty.

But Frank was looking forward to Central Northern Siberia where were the great mines owned by the Russian government and worked by exiles.

"I would like much to see those mines," declared Dick. "I have heard so much of Siberia and its horrors."

"It will not be much out of our way to take them in," said Frank. "We will do so."

Days passed and the air-ship steadily kept on to the westward.

The country over which they passed did not afford any very extended picture of attractiveness. It was mostly bleak and forbidding.

But the course of the Arctic Circle in this hemisphere was totally different from the one they had just left.

The Arctic Circle in North America extends through a region of almost perpetual ice and snow.

But in Northern Asia the summer is longer and quite mild. Extremely productive land is farmed even beyond the circle.

The difference in climate is very marked. The voyagers noted this.

Yet there was a chilliness in the air which necessitated the almost constant use of warm clothing; especially when in mid-air.

At the rate they were going the voyagers were bound sooner or later to reach the mines of the exiles.

The first of these towns was found upon the extreme frontier.

It was small and the buildings were dirty and low roofed. The town was enclosed with a high stockade which was garrisoned with the soldiers of the Czar.

The scene as viewed from the deck of the air-ship was a curious one.

"There are the exiles!" cried Dick.

This was true.

There was a line of the doomed men, with chains and manacles, marching up the steep mountain side.

They were attended by armed soldiers. Haggard and bent they looked, and their manner was more that of hunted wolves than of human beings.

Dick Huntley could not restrain himself.

"That is certainly inhuman," he declared. "I don't wonder that half of the Czar's people are Anarchists."

"It is certainly a living death," agreed Frank.

"Of course it is. Oh, is there nothing we can do for them?"

The young inventor shook his head.

"We have no right to interfere," he said. "We are on foreign soil."

"And where are they taking those poor devils now?" asked Dick; "into the mines?"

"It looks like it."

"And those mines—how many times I have read of them, so far under ground. Deep, dark holes of loathsomeness and filth. Oh, it is terrible!"

The wretched exiles continued their march up the mountain side. The air-ship had been drifting down nearer the little town.

No one noticed this or thought of it. At least no harm was expected to come from it.

But suddenly Dick reeled back with a sharp cry. Blood trickled down his face.

Frank sprang toward him with a cry of horror.

"You are wounded, Dick!"

"Not bad, though," replied the plucky youth, quickly recovering, "it must have been a bullet. It only grazed my cheek. That's all."

Frank saw that this was right, and that the wound was not a serious one.

Then there was a rattling sound against the hull of the air-ship. This was made by bullets.

Frank peered over the rail.

A guard of Russian soldiers on the ramparts below were firing volleys up at the Orbit.

It fired the young inventor's blood.

For a moment he was disposed to retaliate. But he did not.

Instead he sent the air-ship a little higher.

Dick wiped the blood from his cheek and went to the rail again. As he did so he beheld a thrilling sight.

The Russians had elevated the muzzle of a huge cannon and were about to send a shell upward at the air-ship.

Dick realized at once what a fatal thing this would be for them if it should strike the Orbit.

So he sent up a cry of alarm.

"Frank, quick! they mean to fire a cannon at us!"

It required but a moment for Frank to take in the situation. But before he could act the distant roar of a big gun was heard.

The shell came flying up through the air. But it missed the mark. Either the gunner's aim was bad, or else the gun could not be sufficiently elevated.

At any rate the shot did not take effect.

The shell mounted far above the air-ship and exploded.

Some of the fragments fell on the deck but no harm was done.

It was a lucky escape.

Frank hastened to change the position of the air ship, for it was not safe to take chances. The young inventor was quite indignant.

"They have fired on the American flag!" he declared. "I could make an international episode of this!"

"Which you ought to do!" cried Dick. "It certainly was a churlish thing in them."

"I don't believe, however, that we will pick a quarrel with them. Hello! What's that?"

As the adventurers were gazing down at the scene below, they beheld a thrilling sight.

One of the exiles under guard had broken his chain, and dashing from the line, was speeding down the mountain side.

The Russian guards were after him like wolves, firing as they ran. But the escaping exile seemed to bear a charmed life. None of the bullets struck him.

And as he ran he turned his face toward the air ship and made imploring gestures.

The aerial voyagers saw this and Pomp cried:

"Golly fo' glory! he done fink we kin help him."

"Upon my word, it's too bad!" cried Dick, "he deserves help."



Frank hesitated.

It was his impulse to go to the rescue of the fleeing man, but yet he feared an international complication.

"Why not give him help, Frank?" cried Dick earnestly.

The young inventor was irresolute.

"Bejabers, he luks loike an Amerikin," cried Barney.

"That's so!" exclaimed Dick. "Do you suppose they have shut up one of our countrymen in this accursed slave den?"

"I think they would hardly dare do that," said Frank, "but yet—he really does look like an American."

"Of course he does!" cried Dick. "I shouldn't hesitate, Frank. They have fired on us—why not retaliate? If he is a countryman of ours we must consider it our duty to save him."

Frank glanced in the direction of the cannon. He saw that in descending he would be out of range of that.

He delayed no longer.

"Lower the ship, Barney!" he cried.

The Celt obeyed.

Down sank the Orbit. The fleeing fugitive was frantic with apparent joy.

As the air-ship drew nearer to the earth now it was seen that his face was unmistakably that of an American.

At once Frank's blood boiled. His patriotism was thoroughly aroused.

That the brutal Russians should dare to send into exile one of his own countrymen was enough to set Frank's blood on fire.

"I'll fix 'em!" he muttered.

He went into the cabin and from a locker took out a small dynamite bomb.

The air-ship was now within a few hundred feet of the earth. The fugitive was below and the Russian soldiers above on the mountain side.

They instantly opened fire on the air-ship.

This was enough for Frank.

He knew that he was now warranted in retaliating. He did not hesitate.

He threw the bomb far out toward the soldiers.

He did not throw it into their midst, for he had no desire to take human life. It struck the earth and exploded with terrific force.

While it killed none of the Russians, it showed them the power they had opposed to them.

It was simply a hint, and it was well heeded. They paused in evident dismay.

Then Frank threw a rope ladder over the rail. The fugitive ran forward and grasped it.

Barney switched on the rotoscope lever, and the air-ship vaulted many hundred feet into the air.

Dick and Pomp pulled the rescued man aboard.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EXILE'S STORY.

As the fugitive came over the rail he cried in unmistakable English:

"Thank God—I am out of Inferno at last!"

In a moment Dick had him by the hand.

"Mercy on us!" he cried. "You are one of our countrymen."

"Yes," replied the fugitive. "I am an American. You are the same?"

"Yes."

"Heaven be praised! When I was being led away into that accursed hole in the earth, I saw your air-ship. I knew that it could belong only to an American, and I resolved upon one bold dash for liberty. Thank God, I have succeeded!"

The fugitive drew a deep breath and went on:

"You will no doubt wonder what brought me to such a desperate strait. It was the cursed rigor of Russian law, which gives little chance for the innocent and the oppressed."

"Four years ago I left New York to visit the hospitals of Europe to complete my medical education. I came to the Royal Hospital in Moscow."

"While there I made the acquaintance of a young Russian nobleman who was also a student in medicine. We became room-mates and the warmest of friends."

"Unknown to me he was a member of a Socialistic gang, and used to attend their secret meetings. The police tracked him, and one night burst into our room and arrested us in our bed."

"He was sentenced and executed with the briefest sort of a trial. I tried in vain to convince them of my innocence. I was not allowed even to communicate with our consul."

"I was given a travesty of a trial and sentenced to Siberia for life."

"It mattered not that I was an American. I was deemed guilty of complicity with the Anarchists and was exiled. Here for three years I have lived a hellish life of torture. But thank God, I can now see a brighter future, if you will not refuse to aid me."

"Refuse to aid you?" cried Dick, impulsively; "don't you know that we are human beings?"

"I thought that I could depend on you," cried the overjoyed exile.

"Oh, you cannot know how happy I am at this moment."

Quite overcome he sank down upon a chair, and gave way for a time to his emotions.

The Russian cannon was making an uproar below.

But the air-ship was all safe. There was nothing to fear now.

The air-ship did not linger in the vicinity.

Frank would have enjoyed giving the insolent Russians a lesson, but he wisely refrained.

With his electric bombs he could have destroyed the place and all its inhabitants.

When the exile recovered his full strength and spirits he gave his name as Albert Vance, and declared that his family was one of the richest in America, and that Frank should be well paid.

But the young inventor said in protest:

"By no means! I ask no reward for what I have done. I assure you it was no more than my duty to succor a fellow being in distress."

"Heaven bless you!" cried the rescued exile joyfully, as he kissed Frank's hand in the ecstasy of the moment.

Albert Vance soon became a favorite on board the air-ship.

He was cheerful and always ready to do his part. Barney and Pomp liked him particularly well.

When he learned the purpose of the voyagers to make a tour of the earth on the Arctic Circle he was intensely interested.

"I would like nothing better than to accompany you," he declared.

"Yet I know that it is too much to ask. If I can accompany you beyond the Russian lines I will ask no more."

"We will certainly do that," agreed Frank.

The air-ship sailed on now over a barren region.

For a day or two the trip was devoid of incidents, and became actually monotonous.

Barney and Pomp perhaps felt the relaxation more than anybody else.

They proceeded to take advantage of it in their peculiar way.

Barney was going by the cooking galley when Pomp was sifting some flour. The dorky pretended not to see the Celt, and whisked the sieve around in such a way that Barney got the full benefit of it full in the eyes.

For a moment the Celt was blinded and nigh strangled.

The light flour pervaded his nostrils, ears and eyes, and changed his decidedly auburn hair to a delicious cream color.

When Barney recovered his breath he indulged in a series of expletives, which were of the choicest and most varied order.

The air was blue with a tinge of white for a moment, and there stood Pomp, open-mouthed, and as innocent as a lamb.

This angered the Celt all the more. He could control himself no longer.

"Howly murder!" he roared. "Phwat the divil do yez mane, yez black ape? Shure, I've a moind to lay yez out fer that!"

"Golly," protested Pomp, "yo' shudn't hab been in de way!"

"Shouldn't 'ave bin in the way, yez say? Sufferin' shmoke, have yez no gentility phwatever? Shure, phwy don't yez kape an eye out?"

"It was jes' an axident, chille!"

"An axident! Bejabers, phwy didn't yez luk about yez?"

"Huh! I done hab somefin' moh important to do dan dat, sah! Don' yo' sassify me too much!"

"Begorra, it's smash ye I'll be afther doin'!"

"Yo' ain' de 'sperience nor de size to do dat, s

This was just what Barney had been waiting for. It was like a rag flaunted before a mad bull.

With a roar he started for Pomp.

The latter coolly picked up the hissing water kettle from the stove and held it between him and the enraged Irishman.

"Go 'long 'way dar, 'ish!" he cried. "If yo' don't you'll suah git hurted. I done tole yo' dat!"

"Put down the kettle, yez black'coward!" roared Barney. "Begorra, yez don't dare mate me on aven ground!"

But Pomp persisted in holding him at bay, until suddenly Frank was heard calling Barney.

The Celt was obliged to hurry away, but he was by no means pacified in his rage against Pomp.

"I'll cum square wid yez, naygur!" he roared. "Bejabers, yez kin luk out fer yerself now!"

Pomp's joke was a success, but he knew that the Celt meant to get it back onto him at the first opportunity.

So he was on his guard.

Frank called Barney on deck for the purpose of making a descent.

Below there was a fertile valley with a beautiful winding river in a plain of green. Frank and Dick Huntley were anxious to do some fishing in the river.

Vance, the exile, assured them that all Siberian rivers teemed with fine salmon and trout.

"You should get some fine specimens down there," he declared.

"Moreover, it seems to be a safe locality. There are no settlements near."

Dick brought out his fishing outfit, as did Frank, and Barney lowered the air-ship.

The Orbit landed on a level bit of green near the river bank. Then the would-be sportsmen prepared to leave the ship.

Vance now expressed a desire to go with them.

It was arranged that Barney and Pomp should remain and hold guard over the air-ship.

And then the fishermen set out on their quest.

They were soon out of sight.

Barney and Pomp were alone. Or more properly they were left in each other's company.

It was a wary moment for both. It was idle for Pomp to fancy that his colleague had forgotten the experience in the cooking galley, or that he did not thirst for vengeance.



The purpose was deep set in Barney's heart. But he was wary. Not for a moment did he avow his intention. He was as chipper and apparently as genially inclined toward Pomp as could well be imagined.

But all the while beneath the surface there seethed a pent up volcano.

"Be jabbers I'll foix that coon!" he muttered under his breath.

It had been some while since either had set foot on the earth. It was a safe spot and Barney proposed that they take a little ramble along the river bank but not out of sight of the air-ship.

Pomp was agreeable.

"Begorra if the wather in the river wuz not so cowl'd it's roight well I'd loike to thry a good swim," declared the Celt.

"Huh! I done fink it wud freeze yo'," declared Pomp.

"I'm shure av that, naygur!"

Barney's eyes twinkled as a daring thought entered his mind. It was a bold scheme which he believed would turn the tables on the darky well.

This was to in some way induct him into an enforced bath in the frigid waters. A dozen plans revolved in his fertile brain.

To attempt to do this with mere strength of arm might result seriously for him, for Pomp was no mean wrestler. Moreover the point of the joke would be lost.

But Barney was too ingenious by far to be long baffled, and he soon hit upon an idea.

He threw off his coat and began indulging in flip-flaps and other athletic tricks on the green sward.

Pomp was interested and watched him with interest. Then he cried:

"Huh! yo' cain't do somefin' I kin!"

"Begorra! phwat's that?" cried the Celt. "Wud yez be afther showing me?"

Pomp was willing.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BARNEY AND POMP HAVE A FEW PLEASANTRIES.

The darky was good at ground and lofty tumbling. He began turning somersaults in the air and other feats, which made Barney dizzy.

The Celt professed to be badly stuck, and, scratching his anuburn hair thoughtfully, he said:

"Bejabbers, I've got a tougher bread basket than yez anyway, naygur. One toime I held six hundred pounds up an it."

The darky's eyes dilated.

"Yo' don' mean dat, I'ish!"

"Ivery bit av it."

Pomp rubbed his own stomach reflectively, and then tossed his head.

"I don't fink if yo' hab sich a hard stummick as dat dat I kin mek it sick," he declared. "Jes' one lily butt wif mah hed fix yo' all right."

"Go an' wid yez!" bluffed Barney. "Yez wud be only dashing yer brains out."

Pomp's eyes glistened.

"Yo' don' keer fo' me to try it?" he said.

"Thry it!" cried Barney. "Shure if yez dare to do it!"

"I'll take mah chainces!" agreed the darky.

"All roight. I'll give yez lief," said Barney, taking up a position on the river bank. "Yez kin sthrike me jest as harrud as yez please fairly in the middle av me stummick. If yez are beat then yez must threat. But if I beat yez then ye must threat, do yez seel?"

The ambiguity of these sagacious remarks was lost upon Pomp. The darky could only see a glorious chance to play a practical joke on his colleague.

He little dreamed that Barney intended one for him.

He saw that the Celt stood right on the edge of the bank. Back of him was a black pool, many feet deep, of the iciest water on record.

"I done hi! him so hard dat he kerflumix into dat water!" chuckled the darky; "it am no fault ob mine, fo' he done dare me to do it."

Barney's eyes twinkled.

Pomp went back twenty-five yards for a good run.

"Am yo' ready?" he cried.

"Yes," replied the Celt.

Pomp dug his toes into the turf and started. Barney stood like a post until Pomp, with head down, was almost upon him like a thunderbolt.

Then—

He dropped!

Had the darky struck him with the force he intended, it was likely that both would have gone into the pool.

But he did not. As Barney fell he tripped over him and shot like an arrow over the river bank.

Down into the icy water he went with a terrific splash.

When he came up he was about the wettest and maddest darky the sun ever shone on.

Spluttering and gasping he came to the surface, and with a mad yell struck out for the shore.

Barney could do nothing but roll over and over and roar with laughter. This only made matters worse.

A few strokes took Pomp to the bank, but as he emerged he was in a most uncomfortable plight. It was a little the coldest bath he had ever experienced.

He emerged, dripping and shivering, and rushed up the bank.

Then his wrath found expression. He launched a series of expletives at Barney which were terrifying.

The Celt sidled away, not caring to come too close quarters with his colleague. Pomp, however was too busy for a few moments wringing the water from his garments.

Barney kept a safe distance and as Pomp was slowly congealing with the cold he did not venture to pursue him.

But he went at once to his stateroom aboard the air-ship and put on dry clothing.

When he came out on deck again he saw Barney seated nonchalantly under a tree smoking his dudeen.

Pomp shook his fist at him.

"Golly, when I catch yo', I'ish, yo' done jes' gotter look out. I gib yo' de wus' beatin' yo' ebber got."

Barney only grinned sardonically. This was worse than words and Pomp, bent on revenge, started for him.

The Celt made off down the river bank. Pomp followed him for a ways, when a startling thing happened.

With a terrific yell of dismay Barney came to a halt and waved his arms frantically.

"Bejabbers, it's lost we are entoirely. Shure, the divils will get to the air-ship before us. It's kilt we'll be."

Astounded, Pomp turned, and as he beheld the cause of Barney's terror he also was dismayed.

Over a ridge, just to the west of the air-ship, a number of horse-men had come suddenly into view.

They were savage Tartars, and were riding to cut off Barney and Pomp from the air-ship.

"Golly, we'se done fo'!" gasped the darky.

"Phwat will Mистер Frank say?"

This was Barney's thought.

And the catastrophe all came about through their skylarking. If they had been at their posts, as they should have been, the approach of the Tartars would have been seen.

But there was little use in crying over spilt milk now. There was but one course to pursue, and that was to make the best of it and try to reach the air ship first.

So they instantly started far it.

"Run as fast as iver yez kin, naygur!" cried Barney.

"Yo' bet I will!"

The darky could run like a greyhound. Barney knew this, and upon it he based all hopes.

But the horses of the Tartars were fleet.

They bore down like the wind and were sure to come between them and the air ship.

Seeing this, the two jokers tried to beat a retreat, but the foe were about them like bees.

They had no weapons to defend themselves.

Resistance was out of the question, and in the twinkling of an eye they were prisoners.

To say that they were dismayed would but half express the facts.

They thought with horror of the return of Frank Reade, Jr.

The Tartars, literal barbarians, swarmed about them and for a few moments neither Barney nor Pomp felt sure that their lives would be spared.

But one of them, a burly fellow who appeared to be the chief, came to the fore and dispersed the vengeful ones. He caused the prisoners to be bound hand and foot but mercifully spared their lives.

Then they turned their attention to the air-ship.

This puzzled them not a little.

But unhesitatingly they clambered aboard and literally overrun it. Into the cabin they went, into the pilot-house and to every part of the ship.

Many articles they confiscated and came not to grief until they entered the engine room.

Here were the heavily charged dynamos. One of the Tartars went to fooling with the machinery.

He put his hand upon a live part of it.

Slap—bang—boom—bump! He was hurled like a puppet clear across the little room. With such force did he strike the opposite door frame, that his spinal column was disintegrated at the base of the brain and he was dead instant.

Astounded his companions looked all around angrily for the cause of his death.

This, of course, had been an invisible quantity, and their first thought was, naturally, that he had been struck by a bullet.

But this theory was quickly disproved when another of the Tartars inadvertently put his hand on the dynamos.

A repetition of the first incident ensued, and a second dead Tartar lay on the floor of the engine-room.

Aghast the others now began to understand that it was death to touch the strange coils of wire which had so attracted their curiosity. But they were intensely puzzled.

Why should it be death? What strange power was there in those curious bits of steel? They were quite unable to understand it.

Consumed with curiosity another of the Tartars seemed bound to solve the mystery.

He picked up a steel rod and touched the dynamo. Of course he might as well have touched it with his bared hands.

The current passed through his body instantly, and he dropped in his tracks. Aghast the others fled from the cabin.

An uproar arose when it was known to the others that three of their number lay dead in the cabin.

The Tartar is not extremely superstitious, and while the mysterious



power in the cabin was to them incomprehensible they did not yield to terror but rather to rage.

With loud yells of anger they began at once to vent their feelings upon the air-ship.

They began to pound the sides of the ship furiously with their axes and might have done much damage but for an incident.

One of them rushed into the cabin and made a blow at the switch table.

In an instant the rotascope switch was sprung, and the air-ship leaped up from the ground.

Had it not been for the anchor ropes it would have carried a dozen of the Tartars high up into the clouds.

But the anchor ropes held, thirty feet from the earth. There the air-ship struggled to free itself, bounding and leaping furiously.

This was enough for the Tartars.

Those on board leaped frantically over the rail at the imminent risk of breaking their necks.

What was more, their horses tethered near by were frightened out of their wits and broke away.

Away they sped in all directions and the Tartars after them. For a few moments there was lively work.

At this critical juncture, as it happened, Frank, with Vance and Dick, came upon the scene.

They were loaded down with fish, but as they saw the state of affairs dropped them instantly and rushed to the scene.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TARTARS REPULSED.

FRANK and his companions had appeared just in the nick of time. It was at a moment when the Tartars could offer little or no resistance. They were too scattered.

"Jericho!" gasped Dick Huntley. "What's up, Frank?"

"The Tartars!" gasped Vance.

"Follow me!" cried Frank hoarsely.

They rushed down the slope, firing at the few Tartars who stood in their path.

Dick cut Barney's bonds and Frank liberated Pomp; then Frank cried:

"Climb up the anchor rope, quick! We'll keep the foe at bay!"

"All right, sor," cried Barney.

He sprang up one rope and Pomp the other; up they went like monkeys.

But at that critical moment the anchor hedges slipped. instantly the air ship shot upward.

Up like a rocket it went to the height of a thousand feet and still kept on going higher.

Barney and Pomp were swinging on the anchor ropes, and at that awful height looked like flies.

"My God! they will be killed," cried Dick Huntley, in agony.

"Not much!" rejoined Frank, "they are good climbers both, and will get aboard all right."

His prediction happily proved correct.

The Tartars having recovered their horses were returning to the scene. But they were met with such a hot fire that they were held in check.

"If we can only keep them at bay!" declared Frank. "Barney and Pomp will very soon come to our rescue!"

"We'll do that!" cried Vance, as he reloaded his rifle. "Give it to the ignorant dogs!"

The three men ensconced themselves behind a pile of boulders and kept up a good fire at the Tartars.

This had its effect.

They made several desperate charges, but were unable to force the brave voyagers back.

It was no light matter to face the savage crew, for a worse looking lot of barbarians were never seen.

But our adventurers did not flinch, and held their own gamely.

Meanwhile Barney and Pomp, dangling in the air at a frightful distance from the earth, were in by no means an enviable position.

A fall from such a terrible height would of course be certain death. But neither was gifted with weak nerves, and did not falter in the least.

As they were swept upward a great cry went up from Barney.

"Begorra, naygur, howld on! It's to the devil we'll go if we don't!"

"Bet yo' life, honey!" retorted the darky. "Catch dis chile lettin' go!"

Up—up! shot the air-ship. Both dangling men began making desperate efforts to get aboard.

It was no light matter to climb up that dangling rope. But they kept on with the best of courage.

The result was gratifying.

Presently Barney reached the rail and went over it.

"Howld on, naygur!" he cried. "Shure it's a lift I'll give yez!"

"Good fo' yo', Fish," replied Pomp, "only I'se a'right until yo' shuts off de lever an' keeps de ship from goin' up any furdur."

"Which is a good idea!" cried Barney. "Shure I'll do it!"

Into the pilot-house he dashed.

It was but a moment's work to shut off the current. The air-ship came to a stop and began gently to settle down.

The altitude they had reached was so great that the air was frosty. Had the ship kept on it would very speedily have reached the aerial limit.

This would have meant death to the voyagers.

But it was checked in time. Barney now hastened to pull Pomp over the rail.

Once on the deck the two jokers fairly embraced each other with joy.

"Golly, but I'se glad we'se got out ob dat scrape whole!" he cried. "Now we mus' jes' go down an' help Marse Frank out."

"Yez kin bet we will!" cried Barney.

The air-ship settled fast.

Soon it was within a few hundred feet of the earth. It hung directly over the horde of Tartars.

They assailed it with rifle-shots, firing repeatedly at it. The bullets rattled harmlessly against the steel hull, though.

Barney, however, was determined to put an end to this at once.

He went into the cabin and brought a small dynamite bomb. This he hurled down into the midst of the savage crew.

It had a terrific effect.

Full a dozen of the rascals were hurled in all directions either killed or wounded.

A second bomb proved too much for them. They fled incontinently. The victors sent up a rousing cheer.

The air-ship now descended to the ground and Frank and his companions leaped aboard.

Mutual congratulations were exchanged. Barney and Pomp told their story, and all agreed that they had experienced a very narrow escape from the savage Tartars.

No further time was wasted in the vicinity. Vance recovered the fish caught and then the party set out upon the continuation of the long journey around the Arctic Circle.

Once more the topography of the country began to change.

In place of the desolate plains wild mountains and uninhabited valleys, they came to fresh settlements made by the exiles.

In many places these poor wretches had gained immunity from penal service in the mines and were enabled to till the soil for their living.

It was a sad looking country. The turf houses and primitive life of the poor souls who were used to so much better things was truly pitiful.

Our voyagers regarded it with much interest. As the air-ship drifted on over these places much excitement was created.

The peasants all rushed out of their humble abodes and regarded the air-ship with wonderment.

It can be imagined that such a sight as a ship flying in the air was most unusual and indeed thrilling to them.

Dick stood by the rail, and showed them the American flag. They at times would cheer it.

The Yankee flag is popular in that part of the Russian dominions, for the kind shipment of grain and wheat to them when the crops had failed and all in the Russian domains were starving, had won their everlasting gratitude.

No attempt was made to descend and push the acquaintance any further.

The air-ship kept on steadily along the course of the Arctic Circle.

Once more they came to a wild and unexplored region.

Then an accident occurred to the air-ship. One of the rotascope shafts became worn, and Frank decided that a new one would have to be used.

So it became necessary for the ship to descend and wait a few days. A good spot was selected, and accordingly it descended.

No one could demur.

It was an imperatively necessary proceeding, for the ship would be apt to fall if the shaft should give out, which it was liable at any moment to do.

The spot selected for the resting place of the ship was in a little valley between high mountains.

These mountains were volcanic and there was a faint suspicion of smoke lurking about the top of one of them, suggestive of an active crater.

The air was quite mild in the valley owing no doubt to these influences, and all enjoyed this.

While Frank, with Barney and Pomp, was busy with the repairs Vance and Dick suggested going on a tour of exploration.

"Be careful and not go too far," adjured Frank. "There may be perils in this country of which we do not dream."

"Yet I don't believe there is a Tartar within a hundred miles," said Dick.

"Don't be too sure."

"We will keep our eyes open," said Vance. "I know what the Tartars are. We must climb up to the crater of that volcano, Dick."

"Wait until the air-ship is repaired and I will take you up quickly enough!" declared Frank.

"But we don't want to do that," said Dick. "We want to do some exploring on the way. Moreover we want the satisfaction of climbing up there on foot!"

"If there is any satisfaction in that," laughed Frank, "go ahead!"

So the two explorers left the air-ship, and were soon out of sight far up the mountain.

Meanwhile those left behind worked industriously on the broken shaft. So engrossed were they that it was not until an incident occurred that was out of the ordinary that Frank gave any thought to other matters.

Then as he was crossing the deck he saw a huge shadow fall across it.



At the same moment the air seemed to fill with an ashy sort of dust which settled on the deck.

Astonished Frank looked up and a thrilling sight met his gaze.

The volcanic mountain was sending forth immense clouds of smoke which rolled out like a cloud over the valley.

Also it was not difficult to detect a faint reverberation and a quivering of the earth. An eruption was certainly in progress.

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, who saw the thing at this moment, "wha' de debbil am dat? De mounting am all on fire."

"Begorra, that's so!" affirmed Barney.

"Wha' yo' fink, Marse Frank?"

"It is a volcanic eruption," replied Frank. "I think that we will have to change our position to be safe."

"How are we gwine to do dat, sah?" asked Pomp.

"We must hurry and get the rotascope shaft repaired," replied Frank.

Then he thought of Vance and Dick Huntley, and a shadow of anxiety crossed his face.

He knew well the risk they were incurring. They must by this time be far up on the mountain side.

A cloud of ashes or a stream of lava might engulf them at any moment.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE VOLCANIC ERUPTION.

THE more Frank reflected upon the position of Dick and Vance the more alarmed he felt for their safety.

He regretted now that he had permitted them to leave the air-ship.

"I should have known better in such a land of peril," he declared. "What a fool I was! But something must be done at once."

Every moment the eruption was growing in force.

The earth had begun to tremble, and a roar like thunder filled the air.

It was a grand and awful sight which the volcano presented now! Fire leaped from its summit in a great column. The sky was overcast, shutting out the rays of the sun.

Certain parts of the valley were like midnight. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle.

It could hardly be wondered at therefore that Frank should be alarmed for that absent explorers.

There was no way but to hasten work on the rotascope shaft and go to their rescue as soon as possible.

Barney and Pomp exerted themselves to the utmost. Very rapidly the work neared completion.

Of course, Frank did not attempt to put on finishing touches. His purpose was to simply adjust the rotascope so that it could be used immediately.

In this he soon succeeded. The air-ship was ready to sail.

He leaped aboard with Barney and Pomp. The Orbit shot up into the air.

But as she did so she narrowly escaped a tremendous shower of ashes and stones. It was a close call.

And now the great difficulty in going to the rescue of the explorers was at once seen.

The air-ship could not safely travel through all that terrific storm of smoke and ashes. The situation was a desperate one.

The Orbit could only hover in an uncertain way about the scene of the eruption. The fate of Vance and Dick Huntley could only remain uncertain.

And while the air-ship was thus hovering about, watching for a chance to give them succor, the two explorers were having thrilling experiences.

It was true that they had reached a point half way up the mountain, when the eruption began.

Suddenly and without warning the ground began to tremble beneath them. Dick at the moment was getting a line upon a fine pheasant.

Astonished he turned to Vance whose face was deadly pale.

"An earthquake!" he gasped.

Vance shook his head.

He pointed upward.

"Look!" he said, "the mountain is on fire!"

Dick looked, and seeing the column of fire and smoke, cried:

"Heavens! An eruption!"

"That is just what it is!" declared Vance, soberly.

"Are we in danger?"

"Decidedly so!"

For a few moments both men were irresolute and undecided what to do. Had they made a start at that moment it is more than likely that they might have succeeded in safely reaching the air-ship.

But powerful curiosity held Dick Huntley enthralled. He experienced a great desire to get a near view of the eruption.

Vance was desirous of at once getting out of harm's way.

But Dick cried:

"Upon my word, I'd like to see that eruption! Come on, Vance, let us risk a nearer view."

"It is very dangerous!" said the exile.

"Hang the danger! We need not get into a dangerous locality. Come ahead!"

Of course under such circumstances Vance did not wish to be obstinate and therefore reluctantly acquiesced.

So that, instead of seeking a point of safety, the two explorers walked directly into the jaws of danger.

Dick, eager to view the wonderful spectacle at a nearer point of view, hastily ran on up the mountain side.

Vance followed more slowly.

Once he ventured to remonstrate with the youth.

"I'm afraid we are getting into a perilous place, Dick?" he said.

"Keep your eyes open!"

"Don't fear!" replied Dick lightly. "I shall take good care of that!"

And so he pushed on.

So it happened that suddenly they found themselves at a point dangerously near the vomiting crater. It was a thrilling and awe-inspiring spectacle.

But even as they stood there gazing upon the wonderful scene, the awful pall of death began to settle down about them.

A terrible cloud of blackness slid over their heads and enveloped them in utter darkness. It was an enormous floating body of ashes and smoke.

If this should settle down upon them they might be buried a dozen feet deep as were the victims of Vesuvius at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

"My soul!" exclaimed Dick. "What caused that?"

He could not see his hand before him. It was an awful horror.

Vance was now the coolest.

He grasped Dick's hand.

"We have been rash!" he said. "Death is over us!"

"What shall we do?"

"There is only one way. Run for our lives. We must not get separated. Keep firm hold of my hand!"

Too late Dick Huntley saw the folly of his move in ascending the mountain. Too late he regretted that he had not accepted Vance's more prudent advice.

But it was too late for regrets or recriminations.

There was nothing for it but to flee, and for their lives.

So down the mountain side they started. Words cannot depict the horror of that awful moment.

They were groping in utter darkness. They could not see their way a foot ahead.

And still down about them settled that insidious falling cloud of dust and ashes, which filled their eyes, ears and nose to suffocation.

Blindly they struggled on, only to stumble and fall repeatedly.

Once they were separated, and only reunited by the greatest of efforts. The situation was growing worse.

"Oh, my God!" gasped Dick, in horror. "We are done for, Vance. This is our certain end!"

But the exile had faced more dangers than young Huntley. He knew that it would never do to give up.

So he cried:

"Keep along! Don't let up for a moment!"

And still on they staggered. It had not seemed so very far up the mountain but now they were headed down it, it seemed an interminable distance.

Would they never reach the base? On they staggered.

And still about them there continued to fall that insidious veil of death.

Now the ash deposit was up to their ankles. Every moment it was growing deeper and impeding their movements.

Soon it would be up to their knees. Then it would mount higher. Next would come suffocation and—death!

Their remains would never be found. They would be as effectually wiped off the face of the earth as one could well imagine.

Still they struggled on.

The falling cloud of ashes grew thicker. It became intensely difficult to get breath.

Completely overcome, they staggered forward and sank into the feathery heap. There, in blackness and suffocation, they seemed certain to perish.

"My God, this is the end of us!" gasped Dick, as he clung to Vance. The latter, however, was dead game. He made one last despairing effort to go forward.

Staggering to his feet he pushed on, and then—a miracle happened. Both men felt the ground give way beneath them. They fell—it seemed a great distance. The shock stunned them for a time.

When they revived, it was to feel furnace-like air blowing over them. A fierce red light met their eyes in the distance.

It was like a glimpse of Inferno. Leaping flames and surging smoke were visible.

But they were not being slowly enfolded in the winding sheet of ashes. From that they were safe.

They saw dimly the arches of a cavern above them. Far down one of the cavern passages the flames were seen.

These were doubtless in a section of the crater and could do them no harm. The air was close and stifling, but—they lived!

"We live!" cried Dick, staggering wildly to his feet. "Thank God we are saved!"

Vance could well echo this.

It was certainly a marvelous deliverance. His one effort to get further away from death had caused them to fall through an aperture into the cavern passage.

Thus they were saved.

As soon as they were in a measure recovered both sprang up. Dick was for at once trying to find his way out of the passage.

But Vance said:

"Wait awhile, my boy. We don't want to do anything rash. Let us first find out where we are."



"All right," agreed Dick. "You have got more sense than I have. I will do just as you say."

"Well," rejoined Vance, "in the first place we are apparently in some sort of an underground passage!"

"Yes!"

"I take it that it is of volcanic formation, and only one of many which honeycomb this mountain!"

"I believe you!"

"In that event we are not yet out of danger!"

Dick's eyes opened.

"Why?"

"It is easy to see that if the lava or fire in that volcano rises above the edge of the crater it will overflow into this passage and we shall be destroyed."

It was a horrible reflection, but doubtless one based upon certain logic. For a moment the two explorers looked at each other with something like silent dismay.

"My soul!" exclaimed Dick, finally, "What will Frank say to all this? Is it not terrible? We will never see our friends again!"

## CHAPTER X.

### UNDER THE SEARCH-LIGHT.

It was certainly a most appalling reflection to Dick and Vance that the lava was apt at any moment to boil over the edge of the internal fire pot and destroy them.

There was but one way apparently out of the scrape.

This was to follow the passage to its end, and if possible to find where its outlet was.

If this should be at the base of the volcano and beyond the falling shower of ashes, then there was a chance for them.

Ashes were sifting through the aperture down which they had fallen. They bid fair to fill it up shortly.

To go in the direction of the flaming crater was impossible.

The heat was something unbearable.

To go in the opposite direction was the only logical course to pursue. No time was lost.

Down the passage they started.

As they went on for a ways the light from the flames illumined their path. But these suddenly ceased.

Darkness most profound reigned. Then it was that the explorers experienced the greatest fear.

In such terrible darkness and uncertainty it was no wonder that they should quail.

At any moment the flood of lava might come surging down through the passage. To go ahead into uncertain gloom was their only course.

"We can only trust in fate and keep straight on," declared Vance.

"Come along, Dick; follow me!"

So they stumbled on in the darkness. How far they traveled in this way they never knew.

But it seemed ages when suddenly they felt fresh air and something like a faint glimmer of light ahead.

A mad, intoxicated cry escaped the lips of Vance.

"Thank God!" he cried. "I believe we are sure to reach the outer world once more!"

"What a boon that breath of air is!" cried Dick.

Then they rushed on as fast as their tired limbs could carry them. Suddenly the cavern enlarged, they felt themselves walking over vast crusts of lava deposit and then they emerged into open air.

The scene about them was a most wonderful one.

Night, in all her somber shades, lay over the land; above was the vast dome of the starlit sky.

The mountain, silent and cold, was far above them; the eruption was spent.

Only a faint wreath of smoke ascended from the cone of the volcano. The peril was over.

Their lives were spared.

Dick's first exclamation after this realization, was:

"Where is the air ship?"

Instinctively the gaze of each swept the heavens, and it was rewarded with a beautiful spectacle.

High up in the blue ether hung the graceful shape of the Orbit.

Her cabin windows gleamed like jewels set in an ebony frame, and from her bow there shot earthward the brilliant pathway of the search light.

It was sweeping the mountain side diligently, for the aerial voyagers had not once given up hope of finding the lost men.

It was fortunate for them that this was so.

"They are looking for us!" cried Dick.

"You are right," agreed Vance.

"How shall we attract their attention?"

This was a problem.

Of course those on board the air-ship could not see them unless they should get in the way of the searchlight.

How to do this was a question. They could only take a chance, and this they proceeded to do.

So they started at once in the direction of the flashing rays. But when they got near it it would revert to some other part of the mountain.

Barney was making as vigorous and thorough a search as he could. Several times the two lost men were almost in the focus.

It was like chasing a shadow and at length exhausted, Vance said:

"There is no sense in this. Let them go on with the search. We

will get up on some conspicuous point and trust to their finding us. If they do not succeed with the search-light doubtless they will by daylight."

"Which is right," agreed Dick. "We could do nothing better!"

So they climbed up on a huge rock and sat there.

Time and again the pathway of light flashed within a few yards of them.

Upon the air-ship's deck Barney was trying his best to find the missing men.

"Begorra!" he cried, "it seems as if I'd looked ivery part of the mounting over an' divil a soign av thim can I see?"

"Golly! I done fink dem am killed fo' suah!" said Pomp.

"We won't give them up yet," declared Frank; "keep right at it, Barney."

"All right, sor!"

Suddenly Barney focused the light fair and square upon the rock where the two wanderers sat.

They sprang up with frantic gestures.

"Whurroo!" screamed Barney. "Shure, an' I've found thim."

In an instant Frank was at the rail much excited.

"Lower the air-ship!" he cried.

Barney sprang into the pilot-house. Down sank the air-ship. In a few moments it was just over the heads of the rescued men.

"Hello!" shouted Frank. "What, the deuce, are you doing there?"

"Don't ask us," replied Dick, "it's all my fault, and I'm ashamed of it."

Barney threw a rope ladder over and the two men came aboard. They were warmly welcomed.

Then Dick succinctly told of their experiences.

Frank listened with the deepest of interest, and when Dick had finished, said:

"It was a close call for you. I feared the worst for you. Certainly you have had a fortunate escape."

"We are satisfied," said Dick. "I think I'll stay aboard the air-ship hereafter."

"Which is a very prudent thing to do," agreed Vance. "I am with you."

There was a period of jollification in the cabin, a sort of little celebration of the return of the lost men. Wine was drunk and songs were sung by Barney and Pomp.

Then all went off to bed only to rise early the next morning.

The air-ship was speedily under way.

A week passed.

The confines of Asia were reached, and Northern Europe was spread before the voyagers.

At this juncture Vance announced himself ready to take his leave of the aerial voyagers.

"If I mistake not," he said, "your course will take you across the northern parts of Norway and Sweden. There is a small seaport in Norway which is named Skipfoe. It is directly on the Arctic Circle. I am somewhat familiar with the Norwegian tongue and shall be all right if you drop me there."

No one demurred, although all had taken a great liking to the rescued exile.

The Ural Mountains were already in view. Beyond these lay the vast region of Northern Russia.

Much wild and wonderful scenery was seen in the Urals. To attempt an adequate description of all that was seen, would require volumes.

So we will pass on to other and thrilling scenes.

After crossing the Urals, a wild and rugged region was passed over.

Settlements were scarce, and these were mainly Russian outposts and fur trading posts.

One day the waters of the White Sea burst into view.

The sight drew a cheer from the aerial voyagers.

They had accomplished more than half of the journey. And so far it was a glowing success.

What would come next? The question was soon answered.

The White Sea is an arm of the Arctic, and in the northern part of Russia. Beyond it, a few hundred miles, was the Gulf of Bothnia and the boundary line of Sweden.

Now the climate became a little less rigorous, due perhaps to the influence of ocean currents.

Peaceful valleys and thriving settlements were seen. The curious abodes of the Swedes with their agricultural methods were amusing to gaze upon.

In front of each door was a tall pole upon which was a thatch of straw. In this the birds annually built their nests.

It was considered a bad omen to neglect this provision, and indeed it was possibly the means of drawing many beautiful song birds to those latitudes.

The Swedes were a simple and honest-hearted people.

The appearance of the air-ship over their heads evidently caused much excitement.

Great crowds collected and they watched it intently as long as it was in view.

It required not more than a day for the air-ship to cross Sweden.

Over the mountain range which forms the boundary line they sailed down into Norway. Here was seen some of the wildest and most rugged scenery yet witnessed.

This part of Norway was so intensely cold that it was but thinly populated. The little village of Skipfoe was reached at nightfall.



Here the air-ship anchored until morning when Vance took his leave of his rescuers.

An English vessel was docked at Skipfoe. Aboard it he could get passage to England and this he intended doing.

"I shall keep shy of Russia hereafter be sure," he said. "I have not an exalted opinion of the Czar and his people."

"I would advise you to," said Frank. "We will all wish you the best of fortune."

"Thank you."

Vance went aboard the English ship and the air-ship took leave of the shores of Norway.

She shot out over the waters of the North Atlantic where they merge into the Arctic and bore straight across for the North Cape of Iceland.

The aerial voyagers now felt that they were nearing the end of their most remarkable voyage.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN ICELAND.

FROM Norway across to Iceland it was a bleak and forbidding voyage. The cold was most intense.

They got the full sweep of Arctic breezes, and at times these were so high that it would seem as if the air-ship must be blown to pieces.

But despite this she made exceedingly good headway, and one day Barney on the main deck with a glass sighted a point of land.

"Whurroo!" he yelled. "Come quick, Mither Frank!"

"What's the matter?" cried the young inventor, rushing out of the cabin.

"It's Iceland, sor!"

"Iceland!" exclaimed Frank. "That cannot be. Ah, I see. You have sighted Grimsey Island. We are a little to the north. Veer to the south a little more."

"All roight, sor!"

Barney hastened to change the course of the air-ship as directed. Then every moment the coast drew nearer.

And what Barney had taken for Iceland was really, as was now seen, but a small island.

But the rugged shores of the wonderful island of the Arctic Circle could be seen beyond. Every moment their outlines became plainer.

The voyagers were intensely interested, and all thronged the deck. At length the smoke of a distant volcano was seen. Then the air-ship was over the strangest, wildest and most barren region any of the voyagers had ever seen.

There is probably no volcanic region on earth to equal that of Iceland for rugged detail.

Great chasms and rifts in the mountain walls were seen. Only the brush of the artist could adequately depict their wonders.

"Mercy on us!" cried Dick. "I don't think Iceland would suit me as an abiding place. How in the world did they ever come to settle such a God forsaken spot?"

"It can hardly be called settled," said Frank, "only a very small part of it is inhabitable and that is the south and east. Yet, in spite of its inhospitable shores, it is a very old country, and once had an independent government of its own. Many able men have gone forth from its shores."

"Then we shall see nothing of its settlements?"

"No," replied Frank. "Our purpose is to follow closely the Arctic circle which only crosses its northern portion. The principal settlements are Portland in the south, Hecla and Eskiforth in the east. This is the north cape which lies before us now."

Steadily the air ship was passing over the cape, when suddenly Barney espied something upon a rise of land far below which drew a cry of surprise from him.

"Mither Frank," he cried, "there's a number of men down there thryin' to make signals to us."

It required but a glance for Frank to see that this was correct.

Three men stood upon a high point of land and were waving a flag. Frank rubbed his eyes.

"Upon my word," he gasped, "they don't look like Scandinavians. That is the American flag they have."

"The American flag!" cried Dick. "Why, they are Americans too. On my word, Frank, that old man with the white whiskers looks like Professor Buxton Brown."

In an instant Frank read the truth.

It was Professor Brown and a couple of his fellow savants. But what had brought them to this out of the way part of the world?

There was but one way to find out, and that was to descend.

Frank reversed the lever, and the air-ship began to descend. Down it settled rapidly.

Then it was seen that a white sailed yacht rocked in a harbor near. Upon the shore a temporary cabin was erected.

"Hello!" shouted Frank from the rail. "What does this mean?"

"Hello, friend Reade!" returned the noted man of science. "I am glad to see you."

The air-ship touched the earth and Frank leaped out and gripped the hand of the savant.

The expression upon Brown's face was a most radiant one.

"Mr. Reade, you are the hero of the hour!" he cried. "We felt sure you would come!"

"Felt sure I would come?" said Frank in a puzzled way.

"Yes. We have been waiting here for you for a month. Have you followed the exact course of the circle all the way?"

"What!" exclaimed Frank. "Did you come here to intercept us?"

"Partly!" replied Brown, "and partly to observe the transit of Venus. We have gained both points. We are more than glad of your success."

"That is very kind!" declared Frank. "I am certainly very glad to see you. Yes. I have followed the Arctic Circle all the way!"

"Good!" cried the professor, joyfully. Then turning to his companions, he said: "Allow me to introduce you to my friends and colleagues, Professor Morse and Professor Foster!"

Frank shook hands with the learned men. Yet he could not recover from his surprise at meeting them in such a place.

However, they brought news from home which was welcome.

"All the country are up in arms over you, Reade!" he declared. "You are the most popular man in America. Everybody is on the qui vive looking for you!"

"That is a very gratifying thing to know!" said Frank, "but I consider my trip a very modest accomplishment."

"Wrong, wrong!" cried Brown, earnestly, "it is the greatest achievement of modern times. Only think of it. Who else can say that he has traveled around the world on the Arctic Circle?"

"Did you come here in the yacht?" asked Frank.

"We did!"

"Will you return the same way?"

"Ahem!" said the professor, and something seemed to stick in his throat. Frank's eyes twinkled.

"If you care to do so?" he continued, calmly. "I would be glad of your company the rest of the way home—"

"On board the air-ship!" fairly shouted the scientist.

"Certainly."

If he had possessed as much gimp as Barney and Pomp, Prof. Buxton Brown would have stood on his head at that moment, so delighted was he.

But he exhibited the exuberance of his feelings in other and more available ways.

He shook Frank's hand, and even fairly embraced him. A happier old man could hardly be imagined.

"Only think of it!" he gasped. "That means a trip across Greenland! Hooray! that is worth a lifetime!"

Profs. Morse and Foster looked green with envy. But their fate was to return aboard the yacht.

Now that this point was settled Prof. Brown took leave of his colleagues and went aboard the air-ship.

The yacht spread its white wings and sailed away to the westward. A few moments later the air-ship followed.

The course across the Greenland current to Cape Darrell was not a great sail for the Orbit.

It was made in reasonably quick time, and when the white shores of Greenland burst into view Professor Brown was beside himself with excitement.

Greenland is the land of mysteries and wonders, of anomalies and contradictions. One finds crevasses and glaciers alongside of little green valleys, limpid lakes under ice mountains.

It is probably the volcanic character of the country which may explain this.

That volcanic regions have a certain control over their own climate is a well known fact. Thus we often find fertile valleys beyond the Polar Circle under mountains of ice and snow.

As the wonders of interior Greenland unfolded themselves Professor Brown was in his element.

The second day of the flight over the great ice-bound continent, a gem of a valley was espied down among the icy hills.

"On my word, Frank," cried the professor, "I must beg leave to go down there for a little while. Will you grant the request?"

"Certainly I will," replied the young inventor. "Lower the air-ship, Barney."

The Celt instantly obeyed.

Down sank the air ship into the little valley. As it came nearer the earth all on board gave a startled cry.

"What is that?" cried Dick Huntley. "It looks like a ruined city!"

"There are ruins down there beyond a doubt," cried Brown, wildly. "What a discovery for science!"

"Ruins of a city in interior Greenland?" cried Frank. "Why, a city never could thrive in these ice bound and unproductive regions!"

"Ah, but you forget," cried the professor. "There is very good evidence that Greenland was not always what she is now."

"Indeed!"

"There are plenty of geological proofs that her climate was once as mild as that of the southern U. S. Many fossil remains are found in Greenland to prove this."

"Then these ruins may be of antediluvian origin?"

"Exactly! Perhaps a city flourished here before the flood. No one can say how old these ruins may be, or of how much value to science their discovery will be."

"Perhaps we have found traces of the original Garden of Eden!" cried Dick. "Who knows?"

Indeed who did know? All waited with much suspense for the air-ship to touch the earth.

Then all leaped over the rail and out upon the green carpet of moss. Prof. Brown led the way instantly to the ruins. They were all of stone and if mortar existed it was not now in evidence.

Most of the ruins were under the green carpeting of moss and this made their origin obscure.

But from their shape it could be seen that they must have been large and spacious and doubtless of a good style of architecture.

There were none in the party competent to pass an opinion upon



them but Prof. Brown, and he proceeded to examine them long and minutely. They evidently puzzled him greatly, for it was a long while before he made any report upon them.

## CHAPTER XII.

## WHICH ENDS THE STORY.

ALL waited anxiously and with interest Professor Buxton Brown's opinion of the ruins in the little Greenland valley.

It was a pity that they were so obscure. But the learned savant was not to be baffled, so he declared finally:

"I believe that these ruins belong to an epoch contiguous to the flood. Everything points to that. There is no doubt but that once Greenland was a habitable continent with an equable climate. What sort of people its ancient inhabitants were, of course, we can only conjecture. It is safe to say, however, that they must have been thrifty and fairly enlightened, for they understood the construction of large buildings.

"Only think!" cried Dick. "What a long time ago that must have been!"

"Indeed, yes!" declared the professor. "That was a period when snow and ice did not hold sway here as now. I can imagine that Greenland was a very fertile and promising land."

"If we only knew how those ancient people looked," said Frank.

"Very true," agreed the professor. "It would be knowledge well worth having. It is safe to assume, though, that they were in general physique quite a race of giants."

"I have heard of the remains of giants being found in Greenland," cried Dick.

"Oh, yes, and even on the mainland of North America," declared the professor.

All were now deeply interested in the research and continued to further examine the ruins.

And this bit of curiosity it was which led to an astonishing discovery.

Pomp, who was kicking away some of the debris with his foot, suddenly felt himself sinking.

The ground about him had begun to give way, and before Pomp could recover himself he was out of sight.

The other voyagers had seen his remarkable mishap and a great cry went up.

"Heavens!" cried Dick Huntley. "What is the matter with Pomp? What has happened to him?"

In an instant all rushed to the darky's assistance.

They were horrified to see only a yawning pit and darkness below. Barney flung himself upon his stomach and shouted down this:

"Hello, naygur! Is it kilt yez are?"

There was a moment's silence. Then there came back a muffled reply:

"Golly! I'se nigh busted to pieces. Jes' let dis chile git out ob yer!"

"A rope!" cried Frank; "bring a rope quick!"

Away scurried Barney to the air-ship. It was but a few moments before he came back with the rope.

Then it was lowered down into the hole. Frank shouted down into the gloom:

"Give the signal, Pomp, and we'll pull you out."

A full minute elapsed. No answer came back.

There was something like a rumbling sound came up from the pit. That was all.

Aghast all in the party exchanged glances. Not one but felt certain that it was the end of the darky.

"He is gone!" gasped Dick, with white face. "Poor chap! What a sad ending!"

"Indeed that is true," agreed Prof. Buxton Brown.

But Barney set his lips tightly while a light of grim resolution shone in his eyes.

He picked up the rope and knotted it about his waist.

"Begorra, I'll never see the naygur die that way!" he cried. "I'm after goin' down to save him, shure!"

"Hurrah!" cried Dick. "Do you dare do that, Barney?"

"Shure an' I do!"

"Good for you, Barney!" cried Frank. "You are a hero! We will lower you down!"

All caught hold of the rope and Barney slid over the edge. In a few moments he was out of sight.

Then a great cry came up from the pit.

To the surprise of all it was in Pomp's voice.

"Golly fo' glory! Am dat yo', I'sh? Cl'ar fo' goodness I'se made a great discovery!"

"Howly murder!" came up Barney's voice; "is it aloive yez are? Shure, an' phwy didn't yez answer whin we called to yez?"

"Did'n hear yo', chile."

"Yez didn't hear us? Shure, we hollered loud enuff to wake the dead."

"Sho', chile, I jes' wuz down in dat ar place below yender, an' likely didn't hear yo'. Whar am Marse Frank? I done found sumthin' wonderful."

"Yez did, eh? Well, thin, I'll call to Misther Frank. Hilloo!"

Frank, Dick and the professor exchanged glances.

"Marse!" cried Dick. "What does that mean? What has he discovered?"

A look came across the professor's face.

"I'll warrant it is some underground chamber!" he cried. "A new discovery! Hurrah! Let us go down there at once!"

The rope was secured about a bowlder. Dick said:

"I will remain here and watch the air-ship, Frank. You and the professor may go."

Down the rope slid Brown. Frank followed him.

They found themselves at the bottom of a dark pit. Barney and Pomp stood there.

"Marse Frank," cried the darky, eagerly, "cam dis way!"

They followed the darky, who descended several steps and turned an angle. Light suddenly burst upon them, and they were in a high arched chamber with columns of whitest marble.

The roof of the chamber admitted daylight by means of various cracks. It was a wonderful sight.

A buried temple.

This was what it appeared to be. The debris of hundreds, ay, thousands of years had gradually buried it. Yet it was in effect remarkably well preserved.

The polish of the white marble pillars was certainly gone, but yet they retained their shape and still supported the stone arches.

The style of architecture must have been something particularly grand in its day, and was clear evidence that the people who had designed it were of no ordinary sort.

The chamber was perhaps forty feet square, being immense in its capacity.

There was a row of marble seats around it, and in the center was a curious basin of sandstone, and what looked like a sacrificial altar.

This was worn and looked as if it had seen much use. Of course no other remains of the strange people could exist.

Stone is practically imperishable, but not so with flesh and bone. For ages this temple must have stood the wear and tear of time.

Prof. Buxton was right in his element. He spent much time in careful research.

But it yet remained for Pomp to make the greatest discovery of all.

The darky was fumbling around the altar, when suddenly a marble slab slid out of place, leaving an aperture beyond it.

"Golly!" cried the astonished black. "Wha' de debbil am dat?"

Then he let out a yell of delight which made the place ring. In a moment all eyes were upon him.

He began to pull out from the aperture huge bars of yellow metal. It was gold.

In an instant great excitement reigned; all crowded about and were insane with joy at the wonderful revelation.

"Begorra, there's a fortune fer yez," cried Barney. "Shure, did yez iver see the bate av it?"

"It's the pure stuff!" declared Frank. "There's a cool half million in that place!"

"It will make us all rich!" gasped Prof. Buxton. "Shall it be an equal share?"

"Yo' kin bet it will!" cried Pomp. "Dat am de best way."

The gold bars were piled up and made quite an imposing show.

Frank ran to the shaft and shouted the joyful news to Dick.

Then a minute search of the buried temple was made.

But no more treasure was found. However, all were bound to feel satisfied with what had been recovered.

That there might be more in some hidden spot was possible, but by no means certain. During the search there were indications that the roof of the temple might collapse, so Frank said:

"I think we had better not spend much more time here!"

"I am satisfied," declared Prof. Buxton. "I have learned much of value to science."

The others were of the same mind. So preparations were made to return to the surface.

The gold bars were carefully hoisted up by Dick. Then one after another of the adventurers clambered out of the pit.

Certainly the trip around the Arctic Circle had proved a success in more ways than one.

Besides the achievement itself, there had been gathered a respectable sized fortune. Much of value to science had also been discovered.

Prof. Buxton said:

"I am wealthy now, and my share of this new treasure I shall devote wholly to science."

"I shall get married with mine," said Dick with a laugh. "The girl who has my heart will coquette with me no longer when I return with all this wealth."

Everybody laughed at this.

"Well, declared Frank, "I shall endow a charitable society with my share, inasmuch as I am already rich enough. What will you do, Barney?"

The Celt turned a flip-flap, and roared:

"Shure it's after buyin' a foine house fer Mrs. O'Shea an' the children I'll be doin'. The woman will be crazy wid so much money."

All eyes were upon Pomp. The darky cut a pigeon wind, and said:

"Dis chile done elect himself president ob de Wool Town White-washin' Trust. Huh! don't yo' fo'get but dat I'se a la-la, I is!"

Everybody laughed heartily. All were in the best of spirits.

Once more they went aboard the Orbit.

The air-ship sprang into the air, and was soon speeding on its way toward Davis Straits.

Homeward bound!

Magic word. It made the veins of all tingle with joy and appre-



hension. When the waters of the Straits finally burst into view a great cheer went up.

The Straits were choked with ice and the weather was severe. But this did not impede the flight of the air-ship.

Soon the Orbit had reached the opposite shore.

Frank intended to push on over the barren wilds and complete the circuit of the earth at Fort Hope.

Thence they would proceed south and eventually to Readestown. This would bring the journey to its end.

For days the Orbit sailed on over icy waters.

Then one day the wooden stockade of Fort Hope burst into view.

The little garrison piled forth to welcome the air-ship. It was a motley crew of fur hunters.

There were Canadian halfbreeds, Esquimaux, Englishmen and a few Americans. All were in the employ of the famous Hudson Bay Company.

Their astonishment at sight of the air ship was great. They never seen anything like it before.

The Esquimaux were especially puzzled and hardly knew what to make of it. They were curious, pudgy little fellows, and Barney and Pomp had any quantity of fun with them.

It was a circus to see the two jokers try to drive one of the dog teams. Of course it resulted in a laughable tangle.

The Orbit remained several days at Fort Hope.

Frank repaired the machinery, and gravely remarked:

"It will just last us to get home. Of course it is a long trip, and machinery so delicate as this must wear out with such constant use." "Whew!" exclaimed Dick. "Then this will be the only voyage of the Orbit!"

"And the last one," replied Frank, with a laugh.

"But that seems too bad!"

"Yes. The Orbit was a good piece of mechanism, but there are others just as good, and I have in mind now a new invention which I promise you shall excel it."

"I should like to see it," cried Dick.

"You shall!" promised Frank.

The trip of the Orbit southward was without any thrilling adventure. In due course the United States was reached.

Straight to Readestown the air-ship went. Her arrival created a sensation.

Crowds from every part of the Union flocked to see the daring spirits who had circumnavigated the globe on the Arctic Circle.

They were the heroes of the hour, and certainly well merited it. But the Orbit had reached the end of her one grand achievement.

She had sailed her last cruise in the air. Her successor, however, was to be a yet more wonderful invention, and all looked forward with much interest to its coming.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp yet abide in Readestown. The professor and Dick Huntley returned to New York. But they will not soon forget their wonderful cruise around the Arctic Circle.

[THE END.]

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